

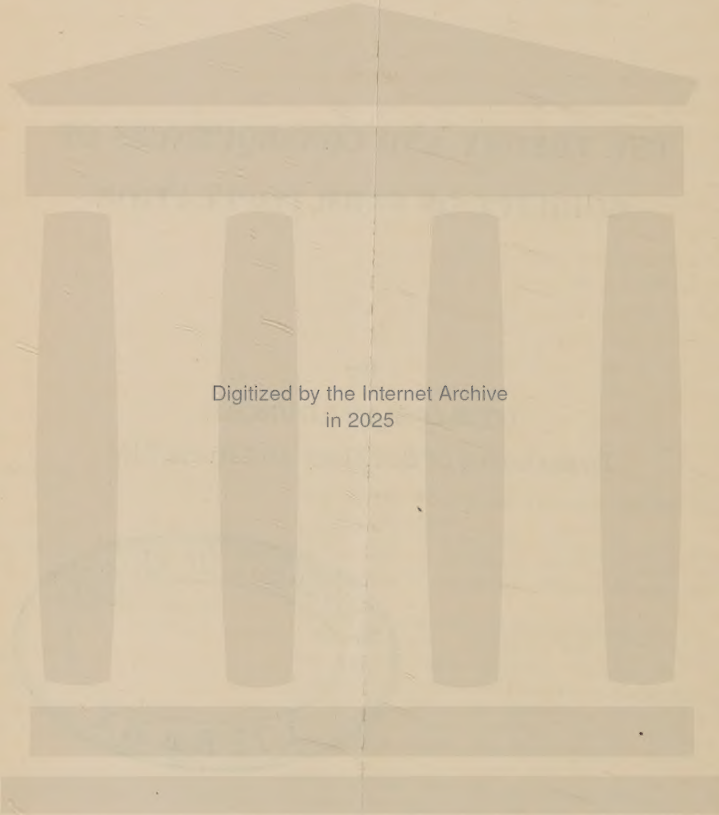
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**THE THEORY AND CONSEQUENCES OF
MOBILITY OF FARM POPULATION**

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THE THEORY AND CONSEQUENCES OF MOBILITY OF FARM POPULATION¹

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The purpose of this circular is to discuss the topic of mobility of farm population under the following principal headings: Causes of Mobility, Types of Movements, The Volume of Movements, Recent Westward Movements, and The Consequences of Movements. The discussion applies to the farm population primarily and secondarily to the nonfarm population.

Necessarily, in this case mobility is to be understood as having reference to spatial, territorial, or geographic movements of agricultural people, although throughout the discourse will be the implicit assumption that there are also shifts in the social positions of people which are of at least as great importance as place changes. It should be recognized also that changes occur in the social milieu which sometimes produce effects that are similar in most respects to those which accompany migration. This may be called social mobility or, perhaps more appropriately, adjustment to cultural change. Such changes as this involves are resultants of cultural, political, economic, or other influences, which may force man to alter his mode of living without necessarily changing his habitat or his residence. Suburbanization, industrialization, or any other fundamental transformation made in the use of land and other natural or socio-economic agents in a given locality may be taken as examples of the case in point. This is also an assumed fact for the purposes of this study. While it is proposed to confine the comments about to be made to the subject of territorial mobility, it would be impossible to deduce anything of value from them unless the factors and processes involved in social mobility are kept continually in the forefront.

The data from which the inferences and generalizations to be presented are drawn are entirely documentary in character, and no special investigation has been made as a background for this particular presentation. The task undertaken here is one of synthesizing and organizing materials available from scattered sources into an integrated discussion. For that

¹ The main body of this paper was read before the Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology section of the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, February 7-9, 1940. While the text of the paper has been somewhat enlarged and amplified by the addition of new materials since it was presented in the original form, the main theses developed remain unaltered.

reason, the representativeness, the reliability, and the validity of the data used have been accepted upon faith in the competence and maturity of the agencies and persons who have supplied the statistics used. For the most part these materials have been gathered and organized by responsible official public bodies, and may be regarded as authentic and dependable.

The purpose of the discussion is fourfold: First, to show, on the basis of the most recent data available, the conditions which give impetus to human migration.² Second, to show the kinds of migratory movements which take place among the farm population and in other social groups as movements into and out of these groups affect the farm population directly. Third, to call attention to the volume of migration and the frequency of the movements of specific groups of the farm population. Fourth, to attempt to point out some of the consequences which accompany migration.

While the factual materials offered and the interpretations given them are somewhat limited geographically to the South and especially to the Cotton Belt, there is no intention that their uses and applications are to be confined to this region. No doubt the inferences drawn may be, and often are, as pertinent to one agricultural section of the United States as to another.

CAUSES OF MOBILITY

One of the first questions which confronts the student of mobility is: Why do people move from one place to another? There are many reasons which collectively may be called the search for opportunity. If a farmer moves from one side of the road to the other, it is because he hopes to be able to do something, to have an advantage, to enjoy a privilege, or to experience something which he thinks will be more difficult of realization if he remains where he is than if he seeks a new location. This is, however, an oversimplification of the matter, for social causation is extremely complex and often is remote and indirect. Each move undertaken by a farmer is an effort to make an adjustment to a crisis in the situation he faces. Although the dilemma before a particular farmer may seem

² Dorothy Swain Thomas defines internal migration as change of residence from one community, or other clearly defined geographical unit, to another within the national boundaries. See *Migration Differentials*, SSRC, Bul. 43, New York, 1938, p. 4. Her definition presupposes that persons actually give up one residence and go to another, and excludes vagabonds, "trailer nomads" and other casual wanderers. This is essentially what is to be understood by migration in this paper. However, transient laborers are not wholly excluded as they have been by Dr. Thomas because to all appearances those who have been included were persons actually seeking to establish themselves in a new residence, having given up an old one. The fact that such people often have difficulty in finding a new place to live should not necessarily stigmatize them as vagabonds.

trivial or farcical to others, it usually appears grim and even staggering to him who is confronted by it. There are, therefore, numerous causes or even classes of causes for moving. They may be reduced partially to categories somewhat as follows:

I. Economic and Technological Causes.

1. Changes in production techniques.
2. Changes in farm organization and practices.
3. Market and price situations.
4. Specialization in production.
5. Relative differences in wage levels.

II. Social Causes.

1. Institutional development.
2. Public land and production policies.
3. Development of transportation and communication.
4. Growth of population.
5. Advancement and spread of knowledge.
6. Class conflict and competition.
7. Social decay and disorganization.
8. Changes in family maintenance requirements.

III. Personal Causes.

1. The insatiability of wants.
2. Enlargement of intellectual horizons.
3. Health.
4. Sense of isolation or nearness.
5. Attitudes toward neighbors.
6. Temperamental characteristics.

IV. Natural Causes.

1. Climate and weather.
2. Flora and fauna.
3. Pests and plagues.
4. Catastrophes, floods, earthquakes, avalanches, etc.
5. Continual hazards, malaria, hookworm, etc.
6. Seasonal variations.
7. Depletion of soil.

V. Miscellaneous Causes.

1. Labor disturbances.
2. Real estate promotion.
3. Discovery or exhaustion of resources.

VI. Combinations of two or more of the above causes.

A limited amount of information on reasons for long distance migration is available. The data apply to Oklahomans who went to California during 1939. (See Table 1.) These figures indicate in a rough way the nature of the causes for leaving Oklahoma. Perhaps they do not mean much as to why the migrants went to California; that is a matter which will have to be left to conjecture. However, there can be little doubt that the factors named were potent influences that would contribute immediately to unrest in Oklahoma. Probably

Table 1. Reasons for Migration Given by Oklahoma Farm Migrants to California During 1939.

Reason for Migration	Number	Percent
Total -----	1873	100.00
Drouth -----	831	44.37
Lack of work -----	807	43.09
Health -----	109	5.82
Replaced by machine -----	35	1.87
Flood -----	13	.69
Other reasons -----	78	4.16

(Source of Data: California Farm Security Administration)

drouth, lack of work, flood, and replacement of men by machines may be only different ways of expressing the same condition to a large extent. However, it is undoubtedly a fact that something had happened which broke the individual loose from his mooring and gave him a strong feeling of insecurity and uncertainty in the community of his origin. In other words, it should be obvious that dislodgement, of which the Oklahoma data are cited as examples, is likely to be a fruitful cause for movement.

The foregoing groups of causes of movement of population are stated in rather general and inclusive terms. They are by no means peculiar to farmers, nor are they exhaustive. In fact, not a small part of farmer mobility is attributable to the mobility patterns of non-farmers. If sixty percent of the farm tenants of a given state are occupying their farms for the first time this year, it is partly because non-farmers have moved to the farm and farmers have moved to non-farm centers of population. It should be said that no scientific approach to the problem of mobility can single out any one cause and say this is *the* cause of a particular move. What has been attempted here is to break down the general cause given, search for opportunity, into some of its more obvious and more elemental components, realizing at the same time that this does not constitute even a beginning of an inquiry into the problem of causation.

TYPES OF MOVEMENTS

Are there any regularities or uniformities as to the movements of farmers, or of people relative to farms? Roughly, some are thought to exist. As far as is known, types of farm population movements may be identified as (1) local farm to farm shifts which are confined to a rather small area, perhaps a local neighborhood, for periods of from one to many years, in which the farm occupied changes often but without resulting in a change of church, neighborhood, school, or trade center; (2) short moves which involve changes of school and church but not necessarily of trade center; (3) moves that transgress minor political boundaries and require changes in all socio-economic institutions which are pertinent to locality; (4) interstate, or inter-regional movements; (5) movements from farms to cities or towns and vice versa, as well as non-agricultural movements within the open-country movements, and (6) international movements. All of these types of movements are occurring continually, at least in the United States, and when taken together they comprise an enormous turnover of population, both on farms and elsewhere.

The short distance, local movements, so far as we have data on them, do not seem to obey any law of direction. Sometimes they appear to proceed spirally; and, at other times, observation shows that they occur in a zigzag path. Apparently these types of shifts bespeak a rather strong attachment to locality. It may be acquaintances, relatives, type of farming, climatic conditions, or any of a great many different attractive forces that tend to hold a family near a favorite place. Some of the relatively short distance movements may proceed by stages and ultimately acquire a directional path.

As for the longer distance moves, it is certain that they proceed principally from east toward west and secondarily from south to north except for Florida and California in which cases the southward flow of population is heavier than the northward.³ However, it should be understood that each movement of population is likely to be accompanied by a counter movement in the opposite direction which exhibits characteristics that are similar to those of the main movement except that it is of smaller volume. Therefore, when we speak of the direction a movement takes, what is referred to is in reality the net movement. Moreover, there are within

³ See John N. Webb and Malcolm Brown, *Migrant Families*, WPA Research Monograph XVIII, pp. 40-44. Also Cf. T. Lynn Smith, *The Sociology of Rural Life*, Harpers, New York, 1940, pp. 42-44, 183-197.

the track of all these major movements a great many eddies and whirlpools which result in much geographic confusion, if Webb and Brown's analysis is correct.

It is unlikely that these westward and northward movements of population can be perpetual. In the past, the westward flow has meant a ruralization of the population, while that which has been northward has been largely an urbanization process. Undoubtedly, with immigration from the Old World practically a thing of the past, an eastward flow of people will begin, since the large cities can maintain themselves at a stationary level neither by their own natural increase nor by the absorption of foreigners, unless the mechanization of productive processes should be so complete as to reduce labor requirements in the East to unheard of low levels. In fact, there are indications that this eastward movement has been under way for some time already. At the present time the balance of the farm-city population movement is in favor of the city; and, but for a stubbornly high rate of natural increase on the farms, it might soon start losing population rapidly.

As soon as movements become long enough in distance to transcend locality boundaries, they begin to assume regularities and uniformities. That is because such movements tend to exercise selective influences upon the persons who move. For example, when interstate movements occur the migrants usually settle in states adjoining the state of origin in larger proportions than in more remote states and seem to be projected more toward the north and west than in other directions.⁴ Movements from farms to cities must proceed largely from the south toward the north and east, since the areas of heaviest density of farm population lie to the west and south and also because the larger cities which are mostly in the north and east attract population from the farms in greater proportions than the smaller cities of the agricultural regions.

Our data on the exodus of American population to foreign countries are too inadequate to justify any conclusions whatever as to the direction which those movements follow. However, the bulk of all foreign peoples coming into this country have entered from the east and have been gradually dispersed toward the rural areas of the west, except for Mexicans and the relatively few orientals that have come to our shores. Such have been the historical movements of population in this country.

⁴ See T. Lynn Smith, *idem*; Webb and Brown, *idem*; Charles J. Galpin and T. B. Manny, *Interstate Migrations Among the Native White Population as Indicated by Differences Between State of Birth and State of Residence*, Washington, 1934.

If we confine ourselves to the Cotton Belt, it is possible to identify at least four phases of population movements. First, there was a Colonial phase during which there was a primary flow from the Mother Country to the Carolinas, Georgia, and other coastal areas in the 17th and the first half of the 18th centuries. Secondly, the movement proceeded to Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and North Louisiana in the 18th century. The tertiary movement was toward Arkansas and Texas in the first half and Oklahoma in the second half of the 19th century. A study of these settlements reveals that they have been largely stage movements and that they have occurred roughly in the order given. Each of these areas was first an area of absorption and later of dispersion. As long as there was a new region to the west there was an easy outlet for excess population. The fourth and present phase began more or less gradually at a time when all of these areas reached the saturation point and were forced simultaneously to seek outlets for their overflow populations.

Relief from population pressure in the fourth phase has been sought in the South in several ways. First, population has moved to cities in the North and to Florida and California. Second, cities have been built rapidly within southern regions themselves. It may be observed that the most rapid relative growth of cities in the United States since 1910 has been mostly south of the Mason and Dixon Line and west of a line extending from Duluth and Superior to Galveston. There are some exceptions to this rule, of course, but it holds in the main.⁵ Third, a desperate effort has been made to bring industrial capital to the South in the futile hope that it would absorb the surplus labor off the farm. Fourth, in an attempt to increase its capacity for supporting its population, the South has sought ways and means of increasing the productivity of its land, such as soil conservation, flood control, drainage, the application of fertilizer, the substitution of the hen and the dairy cow for the mule and the cotton basket, and, in many parts, new types of farm organization and new techniques of production. Fifth, there has been a tremendous increase in the utilization of human energy in public and social services such as building and maintaining schools, highways, health services, agricultural extension and adult education, and in many other ways. All of these things, directly or indirectly, are bound up in the problem of farm population mobility; they either require that shifts be made in the farm

⁵ For confirmation of this point, witness the phenomenal growth of such cities as Miami, Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Durham, Atlanta, Birmingham, Memphis, Shreveport, Dallas, Houston, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Denver, El Paso, and Los Angeles, as compared with most of the northern and eastern cities with few exceptions.

population, or else they follow shifts which are initiated through the operation of other forces. In any event they are outlets through which a large share of the movements of farm people are being channelized and stimulated at the present time.

VOLUME OF MOVEMENTS

The volume of farm population mobility is difficult to measure or even to estimate accurately because the Census data are not only quite indefinite for such uses but are also collected over long intervals of time and without regard to intercensal movements. However, the Federal Bureau of Agricultural Economics estimates that from 1920 to 1938, inclusive, 31,174,000 persons left the farms of this country for cities, towns, and villages and that 22,957,000 persons arrived on farms from cities, towns, and villages, thus creating a net loss to the farm population of 8,217,000 persons for that period.⁶ In spite of this enormous volume of farm population movement, the total number of persons on farms on January 1, 1939, was not significantly lower than in 1910, which was the peak year for all time so far as records show. Nobody knows how great the farm to farm movement during the whole of the past two decades has been. However, observation and scattered data which are available lead one to believe that movements between farms in most sections of the country, and of the Cotton Belt in particular, are surprisingly frequent.

At this point it is necessary to say that farm to farm shifts of population as well as farm to city movements are closely associated with farm tenure status, and probably vary inversely, within limits, according to the age of farmers and their tenure positions. It should be noted parenthetically that tenure status is inseparably linked with the age of farm operators in most areas of the country, except possibly in sections where ghosts of the old plantation are still extant. Whether the alleged "agricultural ladder" is a reality or a figment of someone's imagination, it is inescapable that age is a correlative of socio-economic status and also of mobility of all types. Perhaps this statement may sound somewhat complicated, but the writer is confident it can be demonstrated by existing data which must be omitted here for lack of space.⁷

Another angle on the problem of farm population mobility is the proportion of farm operators who have occupied the

⁶ See United States Bureau of Agricultural Economics, *Farm Population Estimates*, January 1, 1939, Washington (Released June 22, 1939).

⁷ For example, employment, wealth accumulation, marriage, social participation and many other aspects of socio-economic status are conditioned significantly by the age factor, and these characteristics of a population are related functionally to mobility. It is axiomatic that a migrant must be old enough to go from place to place easily and to provide for himself; yet he must be young enough to adjust himself easily to new situations. Otherwise, the dead expense of migration itself operates as a check to movement.

farms on which they reside for a specified period of time. One-tenth of the farm owners in the United States had lived on the farms they occupied in 1935 one year or less. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. *Distribution of Full Owners According to Length of Residence on Farm Occupied in 1935.*

Length of Residence in Years	PERCENT OF FULL OWNER-OPERATORS			
	United States	Cotton Belt	Oklahoma	South Carolina
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 1	6.0	7.4	10.0	7.1
1	4.0	3.9	4.7	3.6
2	4.3	4.3	5.1	3.6
3	3.9	3.9	4.2	3.6
4	5.0	5.5	5.5	5.4
5 - 9	16.9	17.6	17.4	15.4
10-14	15.0	14.7	13.5	14.6
15 and over	44.9	42.7	39.6	46.7

(Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1935)

In the Cotton Belt, 11.3 percent of farm owners had been on the farms they occupied in 1935 one year or less. The corresponding figures for Oklahoma and South Carolina were 14.7 percent and 10.7 percent, respectively. On the upper extreme, 44.9 percent of the farm owners of the nation as a whole and 42.7 percent of those of the Cotton Belt had lived on the farms they occupied in 1935 for 15 years or longer. The corresponding proportions for Oklahoma and South Carolina were 39.6 percent and 46.7 percent, respectively.

The situation of tenants is much different from that of owners in respect to stability or mobility. For the United States as a whole, 47.3 percent of the tenant farmers had occupied the farms on which they were located in 1935 for one year or less, and for the Cotton Belt the proportion was 52.6 percent.⁸ The corresponding proportions for Oklahoma and South Carolina were 54.9 percent and 46.4 percent, respectively. On the other hand only 28.6 percent of the tenants in the entire country and 24.2 percent of those in the Cotton Belt had occupied the farms they were on in 1935 for five years or longer. In Oklahoma, the corresponding figure was 21.9 percent. (See Table 3.)

From the foregoing comparisons, it is possible to arrive at several significant deductions. First, mobility in the South during recent years probably has not been as much greater than

⁸ If the South be taken out of the picture entirely, it will be found that, in the remainder of the United States, 9.4 percent of the farm owners and 36.8 percent of the farm tenants had resided for a period of one year or less on the farms they occupied in 1935.

Table 3. Distribution of Tenants According to Length of Residence on Farm Occupied in 1935.

Length of Residence in Years	PERCENT OF TENANT OPERATORS			
	United States	Cotton Belt	Oklahoma	South Carolina
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 1	34.2	40.2	42.9	35.4
1	13.1	12.4	12.0	11.0
2	9.9	9.3	9.4	9.2
3	7.0	6.6	7.0	6.9
4	7.2	7.3	6.8	8.4
5 and over	28.6	24.2	21.9	29.1

(Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1935)

that of the country as a whole as might have been expected. However, it should be recalled that the national situation is as it is largely because of the tremendous weight of the South in the nation's total farm population. Second, the mobility pattern of the South is probably not due as much to the prevalent types of agricultural organization as such as to the degree of socio-economic maturation to which the region has attained. Third, there are as great contrasts in mobility within the Cotton Belt itself as there is between this region and the nation as a whole. Fourth, the mobility of farm population, even within the South itself, seems to be somewhat greater in areas where there are alternative uses for manual labor outside agriculture. A particular instance is the case of the oil fields and mines in Oklahoma.⁹ The processes of selection and elimination of workers in industries of the types referred to work fiercely and relentlessly, which forces much shifting of population from non-agricultural pursuits to farms. Fifth, the factor of mechanization, which is now making rapid headway in the South, is forcing many moves to be made which otherwise might not occur. Sixth, the Census definition of a farm undoubtedly creates fictitious mobility of farm population in sections where urbanization and suburbanization of farms are proceeding rapidly. Much of this high mobility is at the outskirts of growing cities where farms are being cut up into "acreages." All of these speculations come to mind as one surveys the data on farm mobility in its quantitative aspects.

⁹ Although workers engaged in the extraction of minerals are often loath to take up farming, the experience of Oklahoma and other mineral areas in the Southwest has been that, when the mineral deposits were exhausted, the workers left unemployed were disposed of in one of three ways: Some of them went on to new areas, following the industry; others crowded into nearby towns and either found casual work or depended upon the relief agency; still other released workers became squatters and survived as best they could by very small scale subsistence farming, or part time farming, by getting supplementary aid from the relief agency, or by salvaging what they could from the abandoned mineral properties and leases.

One point on which there is definite agreement among students of population, at least in the United States, is that a high degree of mobility is a distinctive trait of the American population, both city and farm.¹⁰ It is also true that the populations of some areas are more mobile than those in others. In Oklahoma, for example, we have an area where mobility has been a prominent characteristic of the people wherever they may be located, in respect to both those who reside in the State and those who were born there. In 1930, almost 52 percent of the resident native white population of Oklahoma was born in other states, and about 29 percent of the persons who were born in Oklahoma were living elsewhere. For the country as a whole, 23 percent of the native white population was residing outside the state of birth. At the same time approximately 12 percent of the native white population residing in South Carolina lived elsewhere. As we go west into the Mountain and Pacific states, we find the proportions much higher in both cases than in either Oklahoma or South Carolina. In the Cotton Belt proper, Arkansas was found to be the area of the heaviest dispersion and Oklahoma of the heaviest absorption.¹¹ Sometimes, the more mature a state becomes the greater is the exodus of its population and the smaller is its population intake relatively. However, this can scarcely be regarded as a general rule, urbanization being one of the principal disturbing factors. No doubt, there are other important influences, such as climatic cycles, mechanization of productive processes, specialization in agricultural enterprises, and the degree of exploitation of natural resources, to mention only a few of the more obvious forces which affect mobility.

One of the important questions that may arise at this point is: What kinds of people move most? Unfortunately, the information which may be offered in answering this question is limited and fragmentary. However, if one may use Oklahoma again as an example, it is possible to throw some light upon the problem. The Census of 1930 showed that 41.4 percent of the American-born urban population of Oklahoma was born in the State, while the corresponding figures were 49.7 percent for the rural non-farm and 56.5 percent for the rural farm population. From these simple facts it is readily apparent that interstate migration is a more important phenomenon for the urban

¹⁰ See C. E. Lively and Conrad Taeuber, *Rural Migration in the United States*, WPA Research Monograph XIX, Washington, D. C., 1939, p. xi.

¹¹ See Galpin and Manny, *Op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

than for the farm population, and few people who are informed on population movements would claim for a moment that mobility as a serious problem is peculiar to the farm population.

Again, of the total native population of Oklahoma in 1930, 51 percent of the males and 49 percent of the females were born in other states. However, at the same time there were 106 males to 100 females in the entire population of the State, while among those who were born elsewhere there were 112 males to 100 females as compared with 102 males to 100 females for the Oklahoma-born portion of the population. Thus it can be seen that in an area of absorption like Oklahoma has been, mobility tends to be associated significantly with a high proportion of masculinity of the population. Unfortunately, this comparison cannot be carried far enough to show differences for farm and nonfarm populations. However, it is known that agricultural areas attract heavier proportions of males than of females, while cities, for the most part, attract relatively more females than males. This tends to leave on the farms highly distorted sex ratios in the population in which there are more than one and one-half times as many marriageable men as women left on farms in the United States, and almost twice as many in Oklahoma. The effects of these conditions upon important social relationships, such as the family institution, potential population increases, labor supply, economic productivity of the population, and demand for housing and many other consumers' goods, may be surmised readily.

RECENT WESTWARD MOVEMENTS

The westward movement of population has been referred to at some length in a foregoing section of the paper. Perhaps it may be desirable to amplify what has been said so as to indicate something of its effects. Oklahoma has been sending out population for some time. In 1930, there were 63,608 Oklahoma-born persons living in California and 125,647 residing in Texas. This was approximately half of all the people born in the State who were living elsewhere at that time. Not a great deal is known of the characteristics of those people, and we must turn to specific studies to find out much about them. On June 30, 1935, there were 2,633 families whose origin was Oklahoma who were registered in transient camps of the country, and 916 of these, or 34.8 percent, were located in California. In return, Oklahoma had received 607 transient families, only 30 of which came from California.¹²

¹² See Webb and Brown, *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

More recently, the Works Progress Administration in cooperation with the Farm Security Administration studied 6,655 migrant households receiving emergency grants in California during 1938.¹³ A study of the results of this California movement may prove to be highly enlightening. The migrants composing this group originated chiefly in four states, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri. Of the total 6,655 households studied, 2,771, or 41.7 percent, were from Oklahoma, which state was the chief contributor. Particular attention will be given briefly to the movement to California from Oklahoma.

In the migration that is now proceeding from Oklahoma to California it is possible to gain at least an approximate idea of the volume of mobility among various classes of the population. From the figures in Table 4 it is obvious that the greater part of the emigration from Oklahoma to California was from population groups which had been long established. Other evidence which will be cited later leads to the supposition that a very large proportion of these migrants were young adults, many of whom, doubtless had spent practically their entire lives before emigrating in Oklahoma.

Table 4. Number of Years of Residence in Oklahoma Prior to Migration to California.

Years of Residence in Oklahoma	Percent of Migrants
Total	100.0
1- 2	3.7
3- 4	5.7
5- 9	13.3
10-14	13.0
15-19	11.0
20 and over	53.3

(Source of Data: California Farm Security Administration)

On the other hand, the time interval between departure from Oklahoma and arrival in California is of some significance at this point. (See Table 5.) An inspection of the data in Table 5 will reveal that slightly over 75 percent of the migrants from Oklahoma to California spent less than one year on the road before arriving there and a little more than 25 percent of them had spent three months or less while enroute. This suggests two things at least. First, these migrants prob-

¹³ See *Study of 6,655 Migrant Families in California, 1938*, Report No. 765-08-3-4; Also News Release R9-5-FRS, April 20, 1939, Farm Security Administration, San Francisco. Also, the writer received a personal communication from Mr. Frederick R. Soule describing additional details of this report for Oklahoma.

ably worked as they traveled in order to make a living along the way, which if correct would mean that they were in rather straitened circumstances financially and that they might have settled anywhere else if they had been able to find a foothold. Second, it seems that the bulk of them were bona fide migrants and not a mass of vagabonds or habitual wanderers.

Table 5. Distribution of Oklahoma Migrants to California According to Time Elapsing Between Departure from Oklahoma and Arrival in California.

Months since migrant left Oklahoma	Number of migrants	Percent of migrants
Total	1696	100.00
Less than 1 month.....	128	7.55
1 to 3 months.....	304	17.92
4 to 6 months.....	344	20.28
7 to 11 months.....	502	29.60
12 to 35 months.....	357	21.05
36 months and over.....	61	3.60

(Source of Data: California Farm Security Administration)

The speculations suggested in the preceding paragraph seem to be borne out by further data which have been provided. In Table 6, the agricultural migrants are distributed according to tenure status. These figures show that not only has dislodgement been a factor in migration but also that those who were dislodged were principally from the poorer classes of farmers.

Table 6. Distribution of Oklahoma Migrants to California by Type of Agricultural Occupation or Tenure Status.

Type of agricultural occupation	Number of agricultural workers	Percent of agricultural workers
Total	1280	100.00
Owner	35	2.73
Tenant	285	22.27
Sharecropper	186	14.53
Laborer	774	60.47

(Source of Data: California Farm Security Administration)

Obviously, even when unstandardized data are used, the incidence of migration among the farm population falls more heavily upon the classes which are likely to be detached from their homes and communities. This may be verified by taking

notice of the inordinately heavy numbers of laborers, sharecroppers, and tenants in contrast with the very small number of farm owners who migrated.

A similar interpretation may be drawn from the employment data given in Table 7. Having a job tends to check population movements, except, of course, those types of work in which travel is itself a primary feature of the work. In agricultural and in most industrial labor the work is fairly stationary by its very nature. Farm work exhibits this characteristic to an even greater extent than do many forms of non-agricultural labor, as may be surmised from the data.

Table 7. Number of Months of Employment During 1937 of Heads of Oklahoma Households Migrating to California.

Number of months employed during 1937	AGRICULTURAL WORKERS		NON-AGRICULTURAL WORKERS	
	Number employed	Percent employed	Number employed	Percent employed
Total	1,468	100.0	1,539	100.0
None	114	7.77	38	2.47
Less than 1 month	8	.54	6	.39
1	43	3.93	24	1.56
2	82	5.59	57	3.70
3	127	8.65	105	6.82
4	140	9.54	152	9.88
5	128	8.72	147	9.55
6	279	18.99	333	21.64
7	114	7.77	143	9.29
8	126	8.58	155	10.08
9	76	5.18	91	5.91
10	80	5.45	102	6.63
11	28	1.91	41	2.66
12	123	8.38	145	9.42

(Source of Data: California Farm Security Administration)

From the figures we have here, it may be observed that approximately 64 percent of the agricultural workers and 56 percent of the non-agricultural workers had been employed for six months or less when they were interviewed. Also, about 21 percent of the agricultural and 25 percent of the non-agricultural workers had been employed for nine months or more when they were registered in California. Among the agricultural workers it seems that about the same proportion, around 8 percent, had been unemployed altogether as had worked continuously for twelve months prior to registration in California. But only about one-third as large a proportion of non-agricultural as of agricultural workers had been without jobs for the whole year, while a larger proportion of the non-agri-

cultural than of the agricultural workers had been employed for the full year preceding registration for emergency loans at the hands of the Farm Security Administration.

One popular idea to which these California figures seem to deal a severe blow is the prevalent notion that the emigres from Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas went principally from the "dust bowl" counties. In Oklahoma, according to the sources cited, the bulk of the exodus was from the populous counties of the central parts of the State. Those who went from Kansas were mostly from the border fringes of the State, along the northern, eastern, and southern boundaries, with very few from the western parts. The families which had gone to California from Missouri and Arkansas were largely from the Ozark region, while it was from the black prairies and the central plains that most of the movement from Texas began. Although there are evidences that the droughts of recent years have had some part in the movement of population from the Southwest, it is the opinion of the writer that there are other factors which are of far greater and much more fundamental importance than lack of moisture for a season or two.

These studies blast numerous other popular assumptions about migrant households. In the first place, the distribution of the households according to size was almost identical with that for the general population. The majority of the children in the migrant households were under 10 years of age, only one-fifth being 15 years of age or over. The heads of the migrant families were practically all men, 96 percent, in their best working years, more than 75 percent of them being between 20 and 44 years of age and only 7 percent being 55 years of age or over. The median age of all heads of households was 33.5 years. The most usual household was composed of three persons, two adults and a child under five years of age. The usual occupation prior to movement for the majority of the heads of households was farm labor. Of those who gave their usual occupation as farmer, 67.8 percent were farm laborers, 17.7 percent were tenants, 10.8 percent were sharecroppers, and 3.7 percent were owners. Of the non-agricultural workers, 33.7 percent were unskilled manual laborers, 27.8 percent were semi-skilled laborers, 19.7 percent were skilled laborers, 10.6 percent were servants, and all others accounted for 8.2 percent. These transients were not, as is often supposed, a nomadic class of people. The majority had long been residents of the states of their origin. Almost half of them had spent over 20 years in the states of their prior residence,

and only 17 percent had lived less than five years in the states of their last residence. The median amount of work reported by these family heads for 1937 was six months, although 66 percent of them had worked six months or longer, and less than 24 percent had worked nine months or more.¹⁴

The data suggest again that there are many factors operative to cause emigration. While droughts have doubtlessly played an important part in the matter, they have not been sole causes of population disturbances. Low wages while employed, with resultant inadequate incomes, and unemployment have been potent causes of distress. Mechanization of agricultural production, labor-saving processes in industrial production, restriction of crop production under the AAA, low prices for the staple products grown on farms, low agricultural purchasing power for dollars received, seasonal unemployment in industry, interference in labor conditions both by private and public agencies, and even the fact that charitable and benevolent institutions both public and private have aided and abetted transiency, as well as many other factors, have provided a tremendously impelling motive force upon population movements. That is not to say that these phenomena alone are sufficient to explain population movements. Undoubtedly, there are personal factors, psycho-social traits, temperamental characteristics, and other personal variables, as well as many natural conditions, which are important determinants of mobility.

CONSEQUENCES OF MOVEMENTS

What are the effects of mobility? Effects, like causes, are of difficult determination. However, there are certain accompaniments of mobility which do not seem to be present in as great a frequency where there is a low incidence of mobility as where it is high. From what was shown above, mobility is selective of certain bio-social traits of the population, particularly with reference to age. This is true also in regard to sex. Young adults move more often than other people. The consensus on this is that the farm to city movement is primarily a phenomenon of adolescence and early adulthood, the age limits of the period of heaviest migration extending from around age 17 up to 25. However, no age group is entirely free from migration. This is because the migrant must be old enough for his services to be economically valuable so that he can provide for himself. Also the mover must be young enough to be easily adaptable to new modes of living. This has led

¹⁴ This summary is condensed from the sources cited above.

many writers to assert that migration often drains off the more vigorous and virile elements of a population. Unmarried persons are more mobile than those who are married, partly because of the greater expense of moving families than of single individuals. Marriage increases the number of bonds between the individual and his own group and also increases the burden of moving and the economic responsibility of the mover.

Not all movements are equally selective with regard to a given trait. Farm or city movements are disproportionately selective of families. Movements to new agricultural areas are disproportionately selective of males. It is believed, though not definitely known, that the back-to-the-farm movement which was characteristic of the depression period was made up more heavily of men and of families than of unmarried women because urban unemployment was several times as great among men as among women, and because agriculture even at its worst gave refuge to men more often than to women.

From the standpoint of socio-economic status, Zimmerman developed the thesis that the city attracts the extremes of population while the country retains the means. He and his students have suggested that the same thing probably happens with respect to physical traits, social status, and intelligence. If this be true, the net result is that the city does not gain a great advantage nor does the country suffer a severe disadvantage through the rural exodus.¹⁵ E. C. Young claims that the hired man, the farmer's son, the share tenant, the cash tenant, and finally the farm owner leave the farm in the order named.¹⁶ If race may be considered a social as well as a physical characteristic of population, one of the important socio-economic features of rural-urban migration has been the movement of Negroes from the agricultural South to the cities of the North. In this Negro migration, contrary to the usual principle, there has been a disproportionately higher proportion of males than of females. Limited data collected by Galpin indicate that the landward movement of urban population is made up predominantly of persons who have had prior farm experience and who are largely from 30 to 50 years of age.¹⁷ Perhaps there are many other correlatives of rural-urban population

¹⁵ See C. C. Zimmerman and O. D. Duncan, "The Migration to Towns and Cities," *Jour. Farm. Econ.* X, 4, October, 1928, pp. 506-515. Noel P. Gist and Carroll D. Clark contend that this is an over simplification of the problem. See their paper, "Intelligence as a Selective Factor in Rural-Urban Migration," *Amer. Jour. Sociol.* XLIV 1, July 1938, pp. 36-58.

¹⁶ E. C. Young, *The Movement of Farm Population*, Cornell, AES Bul. 426, Ithaca, 1924, p. 88.

¹⁷ Sorokin, Zimmerman and Galpin, *A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1932, Vol. III, pp. 625-627. Also, T. Lynn Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

movements which are of importance, but so little is known of them that one dare not speculate beyond what has been said here.

In the foregoing data there are evidences of a rather fierce selection. First, the incidence of mobility falls heaviest upon the smaller families. Perhaps this is partly because these families can move more cheaply and more easily than larger families. Second, there appears to be a selection of young and incompleated families. This accounts partly for the rather small size of the families. It also suggests that the more virile elements of the population constitute the largest proportions of the moving classes. Third, from the descriptions given it is apparent that those whose socio-economic positions at home were most precarious and insecure were moving out in the largest proportions. Moreover, the reports indicate that the exodus has been heaviest among those classes which are least able to bear the costs of moving and that the economic conditions which necessitate moving bear down most relentlessly upon the low-wage-earning groups.

In the discussion of farm-city movements of population, it has been pointed out either implicitly or explicitly that the net results are: (1) a masculinization of the country and an effeminization of the city; (2) a relative deficit of children and old people in the cities and a deficit of young adults and persons "in prime of life" in the country; (3) a strain upon the farm family induced by a distorted proportion of unmarried men stranded on the farms; (4) a relatively high proportion of prospective producers in the city population and an unduly high proportion of potential consumers in the farm population. Then it may be mentioned further, without offering supporting proofs, although such proofs are readily available, that there are other social results which have not been implied up to now. They are presented as self-evident facts: (1) that there is a continual drain of agricultural wealth to the city in the form of the costs of education and rearing of the migrants who leave the farms at the thresholds of their most productive years; (2) that there has been a cultural depletion of the rural communities in the form of loss of local leadership; (3) that per capita economic productivity of the cities has been increased at the expense of the farms because of the disturbing effects of migration upon the age composition of the farm population; (4) that the national birth rate has been depressed because of childless marriages and postponed marriages in the cities and because of limited opportunities for marriage to males in the country; and (5) that rural culture is being rapidly refashioned after patterns resembling that of the cities. This is not to say

that these things are either good or bad, but they are forces which must be dealt with in any attempt at dealing with the social problems which confront us as a people at this time.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it may be said that the problems of mobility inhere in the fact that it tends to be destructive of existing social bonds and established relationships. We have a predisposition to view with alarm that which breaks down socially sanctioned patterns of life which have been built up by a slow and difficult process of trial, error, and accommodation. A high degree of mobility brings together conflicting points of view and dislodges vested interests. It breeds conflict, a feeling of dissatisfaction with things as they used to be. It brings together antagonistic racial, nationality, political, linguistic, religious, economic, and psychological elements of population, and generates contempt, skepticism, and cynicism with respect to "the sacred verities." On the other hand, it stands to reason that a society in which the members are tied down and immobile may disintegrate easily. It is in societies which are the most stable that military dictatorships, feudal overlordship, and autocratic social systems have arisen and flourished. There is no surer index of subjugation and servility of the masses of human beings than absolute fixity of place and social condition. Change of social condition in one way or another is inevitable with change of location. Moreover, mobility may be compared to metabolism. It is a method of removing worn out social structures and making way for new structures to grow and multiply. Migration is and has been one of our chief carriers of new thought, new culture, and new forms of collective existence.

While there are thought to be no new continents to be discovered, it remains that new frontiers must be discovered if a large portion of the present population of this country is not to die without issue. Perhaps migration holds the solution for our present debacle, but who knows?